

THOMAS PAINE AND THE FRANKLINS

DIXON WECTER

The University of California at Los Angeles

IT HAS BEEN supposed that Thomas Paine met Benjamin Franklin at some time during the winter of 1772-1773, when the exciseman from Lewes was in London trying to get before Parliament a measure for the relief of his fellow civil servants.¹ Paine's interest in electricity—reflected later in his articles under the signature of "Atlanticus" in the *Pennsylvania Magazine*—and his keen, forthright, skeptical mind probably recommended him to Franklin's notice. At any rate, after Paine's dismissal as exciseman and his decision to start life anew in America, Franklin on September 30, 1774, wrote him a letter of introduction to Richard Bache describing the bearer as "an ingenious worthy young man."² Upon Paine's arrival in Philadelphia on the last day of November after a tedious voyage and a severe illness,³ it appears that he owed the ministrations of Dr. Kearsley and possibly the saving of his life to possession of this letter from Franklin.⁴ His first report to Franklin from the New World, dated March 4, 1775, reflects a strong personal gratitude to the sage as his sponsor and advocate in America; this was a sentiment which colored all his future relations with Franklin.⁵ Paine's introduction to America bore of course its most

¹ Moncure D. Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, cited hereinafter as *Life* (New York and London, 1893), I, 36.

² *Writings of Franklin*, ed. A. H. Smyth (New York, 1905), VI, 248-249.

³ Cf. Frank Smith, "The Date of Thomas Paine's First Arrival in America," *American Literature*, III, 317-318 (Nov., 1931).

⁴ Frank Smith, *Thomas Paine: Liberator* (New York, 1938), pp. 11-12.

⁵ His letter to Franklin will be found in *Life*, I, 40-41. To Franklin on September 23, 1785, Paine wrote: "In making you this address I have an additional pleasure in reflecting, that, so far as I have hitherto gone, I am not conscious of any circumstance in my conduct that should give you one repentant thought for being my patron and introducer in America" (*Life*, I, 212-213). Franklin replied on September 27: "Be assured, my dear Friend, that instead of Repenting that I was your Introducer into America, I value myself on the Share I had in procuring for it the Acquisition of so useful and valuable a Citizen" (*Writings of Franklin*, IX, 467-468). Paine's sentiment as a protégé of Franklin is likewise reflected in the hitherto unpublished letters, reporting his activities, which are edited below. The fact that Paine "was sent to this Country by old Franklin"—with the imputation of a deliberate purpose, as later events suggested—was well noted by the Loyalists; cf. B. F. Stevens, *Facsimiles of MSS . . . relating to America 1773-1783* (London, 1890), No. 115.

notable result soon after Franklin's return to Pennsylvania later in 1775, when under the growing political tension Paine was inspired to write *Common Sense*—a pamphlet so clear, telling, and homely in its persuasion that perhaps its highest praise was its frequent ascription to Franklin.⁶

The hearty collaboration of these two men in the cause of American independence need not blind us to a fundamental difference in their attitude as revolutionaries. It is best illustrated by the traditional story that Franklin once remarked, "Where liberty is, there is my country," whereupon Paine retorted, "Where liberty is not, there is my country."⁷ Paine was a born rebel, although it took him some years to discover that dissent was his true intellectual climate and the pen of propaganda his most effective weapon. At his best a Cromwell in the realms of thought, and at his worst a gadfly to Church and State,⁸ Paine was a man whose keen though superficial genius included a rare personal gift for irritating all save a minority of kindred souls. Franklin's deeper and more stable character radiated a characteristic serenity; he was a master in the art of mollifying, with a pervasive charm as well as an essential common sense which Paine—despite his *nom de plume*—conspicuously lacked. Indeed, Paine had an ingredient of fanaticism wholly absent from the make-up of Poor Richard. Their roles in the American Revolution were appropriately very different—Paine being the incendiary pamphleteer, and Franklin the diplomat to the most suave court in Europe. The few known letters which passed between Paine and Franklin during the Revolution, reflecting both official and personal concerns, are therefore of substantial interest to the student of American literature and history. Two hitherto unpublished and apparently unknown letters from Paine to Franklin in 1777—earlier than any letters of their Revolutionary correspondence previously printed—and one letter written in the autumn of 1778 and carried to Paris by Lafayette, are found among the Bache Papers lately acquired by the American Philosophical So-

⁶ Cf. *Life*, I, 67, which relates also the familiar anecdote of the Loyalist lady who reproached Franklin for using in *Common Sense* such an epithet as "the royal brute of Britain," and his rejoinder that he would never have so dishonored the brute creation.

⁷ Cited without source by Smith, *Thomas Paine*, p. 1.

⁸ The traditional nineteenth-century hostility to Paine as a purely destructive force, a prophet of nihilism, was of course an exaggeration which later criticism has sought to correct; see, for example, Harry Hayden Clark, "Toward a Reinterpretation of Thomas Paine," *American Literature*, V, 132-145 (May, 1933).

ciety. The first, addressed "The Hon^{ble}. Benⁿ. Franklin LL D / Commissioner from the American States / at the Court of / Versailles [*sic*]" and marked "Private," is endorsed on the back "T Payne to BF. 20 June 77."

Philadelphia June 20th. 1777—

My Dear Sir

I have just Time to write you a Word or two, and have the pleasure of acquainting you of my being appointed Secretary to the Committee for Foreign Affairs.⁹ I conceive the honor to be the greater as the appointment was only [*sic*] unsolicited on my part but made unknown to me.

The News of your safe arrival in France was received here with inexpressible satisfaction. The New-York Gentry were very early acquainted with your setting off, I was at that Time, at Fort Lee¹⁰ and saw the account of it in the New York papers the fourth day after your departure from Philadelphia,¹¹ which greatly encreased my anxiety for your safety, as I apprehended they would endeavor to make some use of the Information—There has been such a Wonderful and visible Chain of Matters, without the disorder of a s[ingle? *MS damaged*] link, in bringing this Important Affair to an Issue, that a Man must be an Infidel not to think heaven has some hand in it.¹²

I send you two or three Setts of a little Production of mine (the Crisis) being all which are left at the Printers out of eighteen Thousand

⁹ For Paine's appointment to this office on April 17, 1777, see *Life*, I, 89. Paine held this post until January 8, 1779, when he resigned under fire following his vigorous attack on Silas Deane and his supposed indiscretion in revealing secret correspondence. On March 4, 1779, he reported his resignation to Franklin (*Calendar of Franklin Papers in American Philosophical Society*, II, 36-37).

¹⁰ Paine was stationed there as volunteer aide-de-camp to General Greene; see Smith, *Thomas Paine*, pp. 36-37.

¹¹ Franklin's embarkation on October 27, 1776, was relayed almost immediately to the British authorities in New York, despite precautions of secrecy. From that city on October 28 Sir Grey Cooper wrote: "The Arch— Dr. Franklin, has lately eloped under a cloak of plenipotentiary to Versailles" (quoted by James Parton, *Life and Times of Franklin*, New York, 1864, II, 205).

¹² Notwithstanding his later reputation for "infidelity," Paine at this period of life rather frequently alluded to the interposition of Heaven upon the side of American independence; see *Crisis No. I* (*Writings of Paine*, ed. Conway, New York, 1894, I, 171), *Crisis No. V* (*ibid.*, I, 247), and *Life*, I, 232. The evolution of his religious opinions toward deism "soon after I published the pamphlet *Common Sense*" (*Writings*, IV, 22), has been recently and ably treated by Robert P. Falk, "Thomas Paine: Deist or Quaker?" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXII, 52-63 (Jan., 1938), and "Thomas Paine and the Attitude of the Quakers to the American Revolution," *ibid.*, LXIII, 302-310 (July, 1939). The topic is not without interest to a student of the Paine-Franklin correspondence because of Franklin's celebrated letter to an unnamed infidel author, seeking to dissuade him from "unchaining the Tyger" (*Writings of Franklin*, IX, 521). Jared Sparks's identification of the recipient as Paine has been seriously doubted by later editors.

besides what have been printed in the other States, you will see by the first Number and date that it was written in a Rage when our affairs were at their lowest ebb and things in the most gloomy State.¹³ I think Almon might venture to publish the Second Number but if any of them be published in France, some republican expressions should be omitted.¹⁴

I intend next Winter to begin on the first Volume of the Revolution of America, when I mentioned it to you the Winter before last you was so kind as to offer me such Materials in your possession as might be necessary for that Purpose.¹⁵ As I imagine you will appear in a New Edition by some Capital engraver at Paris I beg to be favored with a Copy and shall be exceedingly obliged if you could by the next Conveyance send me the Gentlemen & Universal Magazines for 74. 75 and 76—the two Reviews & Parliamentary debates for the same years,¹⁶ and such

¹³ In the *Pennsylvania Packet*, March 20, 1779, Paine wrote: "I had begun the first number of the *Crisis* while on the retreat, at Newark, with a design of publishing it in the Jerseys, as it was General Washington's intention to have made a stand at Newark, could he have been timely reenforced; instead of which nearly half the army left him at that place, or soon after, their time being out." In his "Journal of the American Army, from the taking of Fort Washington" Paine wrote of the capture of Fort Lee: "The fortune of our arms was now at its lowest ebb—but the tide was beginning to turn" (*The Remembrancer*, London, 1778, p. 29).

¹⁴ John Almon (1737-1805), London printer and bookseller, intimate friend of John Wilkes and chronically *persona non grata* with the British Government, published material sympathetic to the American cause in his annual *Remembrancer; or, Impartial Repository of Public Events*; the issue for 1777, published in 1778, pp. 28 ff., contained Paine's "Journal," as cited above, n. 13. *Crisis No. II*, to which Paine alludes in the present letter, was dated January 13, 1777, and addressed to Lord Howe and by implication to the British sponsors of the war. *Common Sense* had been translated promptly into French, with the expurgation of antimonarchist passages, and published in Paris on May 4, 1776, in an edition now exceedingly rare (F. Rabbe's translation of Conway's *Life*, with amplifications, entitled *Thomas Paine et la révolution dans les deux mondes*, Paris, 1900, p. 170 and n.). However, the earliest French translation of *The Crisis* which I am able to find listed in catalogues of the Bibliothèque Nationale and the British Museum is *La crise américaine . . .*, Paris, Frimaire, l'an II^e [i. e., 1793]; this was published while Paine himself was in the thick of the French Revolution, and of course called for no such expurgation as here proposed.

¹⁵ In this same year, 1777, Paine wrote: "In October, 1775, Dr. Franklin proposed giving me such materials as were in his hands towards completing a history of the present transactions, and seemed desirous of having the first volume out next spring" (*Life*, I, 67). To Franklin on May 16, 1778, Paine expressed his continued interest in the project, and his thanks for pamphlets Franklin was then sending (*ibid.*, I, 112). Concerning Paine's absorption in the proposed history, see his letters to Henry Laurens on Sept. 14, 1779, and to George Washington, April 28, 1784 (*ibid.*, I, 148-149 and 203). Conway conjectures that such materials as Franklin gave Paine were destroyed in the Bonneville fire in St. Louis (*ibid.*, I, xxi).

¹⁶ "The two Reviews" are the Whig *Monthly Review*, founded in 1749, and its Tory rival, *The Critical Review*, begun in 1756. Paine's request for "Parliamentary debates for the same years" (1774-76) refers doubtless to the series called *Debates and Proceedings: 1743-1774*, and continued from 1774 onwards by Paine's acquaintance John Almon as *The Parliamentary Register*. There seems to have been no series published during these

as are come out since and the last Court Register—please to make the Charge and I will pay it to M^r. Beache [*sic*]¹⁷

I am Honored Sir

y^r. Obligated and Affectionate

Hbl Servant

T P

The Hon^{bl}. Benⁿ. Franklin LL. D

P. S. Please to present my Respect to your Colleagues

I send you the last Paper

The second letter, directed to “The Hon^{ble}. Benjⁿ Franklin LL D / Commissioner from Congress / at / Paris,” and endorsed “T. Payne to BF. / July 9th 77,” was written less than three weeks later:

Philadelphia July 9th. 1777

My dear Sir

The dispatches being made up yesterday I herewith inclose you the papers of last night and this morning. Gen^l Howe, by every preparation, is about leaving N. York as he has already retreated from the Army which it was his business to conquer, it is impossible to say what may be his next movement—some suppose the North River to effect a junction with Burgoyne:¹⁸ but there are, I think, too many reasons against this Project; one of which is, that as they have no other army than this, they are obliged to make use of it as an Army of observation on the motions of the French & Spaniards in the West Indies, and for that reason will, If they have any discretion, keep it somewhere about the Coast: another objection agst the North River is, the leaving our Army and a River of near 150 miles in their rear, which Circumstances render the safe return of their fleet a matter of great doubt, and any considerable damage done to them in that Quarter would be like wounding an Eagle in the wing.¹⁹ M^r Gross in his English Antiquities mentions fire arrows being used for disabling or destroying fleets but the Extract, which I have seen, gives no discription [*sic*] how the Machine was constructed

years which bore the exact title “Parliamentary debates”; cf. Judith Blow Williams, *Guide to the Printed Materials for English Social and Economic History 1750-1850* (New York, 1926), I, 42.

¹⁷ Richard Bache, Franklin’s son-in-law, to whom Paine had borne the well-known letter of introduction.

¹⁸ In *Crisis* No. V, March 21, 1778, Paine looked back upon recent events and thankfully wrote of “the miseries we are so graciously preserved from” by the failure of Burgoyne in the heyday of his power to join forces with Howe (*Writings of Paine*, I, 242).

¹⁹ Just a week after the present letter Paine wrote to William Bingham more explicitly describing the hopeful outlook for American military strategy; see *Life*, I, 93.

by which they were thrown. He says Sir Richard Hawkins did incredible damage to the whole Squadron of Spanish Men of War on the Coast of Peru, and that admiral Watson in the East Indies last War used them in an engagement with Mons D Ache, with great success.²⁰

I have made a draft of a Bow, something on the Plan of the Steel Cross by which I think will [*sic*] throw an Iron Arrow across the Delaware. I purpose, enclosing the fire in a bulb near the Top



I have shewn it to M^r Rittenhouse who joins me in getting one made for experiment.²¹

Gen^l Howe will probably give an Air to his retreat from the Jerseys by saying that he endeavoured in vain to bring Gen^l Washington to a Gen^l Action—If this reason be admitted it proves the Impossibility of his ever Conquering. The fact, however is this, Gen^l Washington does not *immediately* command much more than half the Army, and could Gen^l Howe with his whole force bring General Washington to an action with little more than half he w^d have done it²²—but whenever the latter collects his whole force together, either to receive or attack Gen^l Howe, he leaves the field to him.—

In my former I informed you of my being appointed Secretary to the Committee for foreign Affairs, and requested you to send me the Reviews, Gentlemans & Universal Magazines and Parliamentary Registers for 74. 75. 76 and that I would account for them to M^r Beach [*sic*]. lest that Letter should miscarry I renew my request in this, with any such other Pieces as you may be so kind as to favor me with—I intend towards

²⁰ Francis Grose in 1773 published the first volume of *Antiquities of England and Wales*: "The manner of using these fireworks was, by throwing them from petraries or cross bows, or fixing them to the great darts and arrows, and shooting them into the towns; a method . . . used with good success by the English, the last war, in a naval engagement in the East Indies, between the squadron of Monsieur d'Ache and Admiral Watson" (London ed., 1787, I, 26).

²¹ David Rittenhouse, an intimate friend of Franklin, was a familiar of Thomas Paine as early as 1755, according to the testimony of Dr. Rush (cited in that generally untrustworthy book, Cheetham's *Life of Paine*, New York, 1809, p. 39). Conway, *Life*, I, 201 n., mentions an experiment with gases in which Paine collaborated with Rittenhouse. I find no record of Rittenhouse's experiments with fire arrows, although his tireless investigation of ballistics and of telescopic sights on rifles, during the Revolution, is mentioned by M. J. Babb, "David Rittenhouse," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LVI, 216 (July, 1932).

²² Cf. *Crisis* No. V, in *Writings*, I, 239.

the latter End of the Year to send for your approbation the plan on which I intend to conduct the History of this Revolution

I am Dear Sir

with every wish for your health & happiness

Your obliged Humble Serv^t.

T P—n²³

Please to present my best respects to your worthy colleagues

From Yorktown, Pennsylvania, on May 16, 1778, Paine wrote Franklin what appears to be the next letter in their known correspondence—answering a letter of the previous October 7 which seems not to have survived, and giving Franklin a long résumé of military events during the past winter.²⁴ Again in October of this year Paine wrote to Franklin. This letter, here first presented from the Bache Papers, is franked “Mr. Paine” and directed to “His Excellency / Benjamin Franklin / Paris / Favor / Marquis de Fayette,” with the endorsement in Franklin’s hand “Mr Paine / Oct. 24. 78.” Lafayette had reached Philadelphia on October 13, 1778, and remained a fortnight before traveling northward; however, he did not sail from Boston until January 11, 1779.²⁵

Philadelphia Oct^r. 24th. 1778

Dear Honored Sir

I congratulate you on your accession to the State of Minister Plenipotentiary.²⁶ Could you have lived to fill a particular point in the Circle of human Affairs, it would have been that to which you are now so honorably called.

We rub and drive on, all things considered, beyond what could ever be expected, and instead of wondering why some things have not been done better, the greater wonder is we have done so well.—As I wish to render the History of this Revolution as compleat as possible I am unwilling to begin it too soon, and should be glad to consult you first, because the *real Motives* of the British King in commencing the War will form a considerable political Part. I am sufficiently perswaded myself that they wished for a Quarrel and intended to annex America to the Crown

²³ The initials *T* and *P* are interwoven in an elaborate device; the signature “P—n” recalls the story told by Oldys and other generally hostile biographers that the name was correctly spelled “Pain.” Cf. Smith, *American Literature*, I, 352.

²⁴ *Writings*, I, 384-394.

²⁵ According to the itinerary in J. Bennett Nolan, *Lafayette in America Day by Day* (Baltimore, 1934).

²⁶ Franklin’s appointment had been made on September 14, 1778 (*Journals of the Continental Congress*).

of England as a Conquered Country: they had no doubt of Victory and hoped for what they might call a Rebellion, but we have not, on this side the water, sufficient proof of this at present. I intend to embellish it with plates of heads Plans &c which likewise cannot be perfected here.

I enjoy thank God a good share of health and hopes and tho' my situation is no ways advantageous, it is nevertheless agreeable. I have the pleasure of being respect[ed *MS torn*] and I feel a little of that satisfactory kind of pride that tells me I have some right to it. I am not much hurried in the Secretary department, and have sufficient leisure for any thing else.²⁷

At this Time the public expectations run high on the Enemy quitting New York, but for what or where is all uncertain, neither do I believe they know what to do themselves.

The Marquiss de Fayette returns with the warmest Thanks from this Country. His amiable and benevolent Manners have been a living contradiction to the narrow spirited declarations of the British Commss^{rs}.²⁸ He happily returns in safety, which, considering the exposures he has gone thro', is rather to be wondered at.²⁹

A large Detachment sailed from N York Destination unknown—probably for Boston, but as you will receive later Information than this Letter can convey, any thing which I may mention will be of little use.

I am, with every wish for your happiness

Your obliged and affectionate

Humble Serv^t.

T. Paine

Please to present my Comp^{ts}. to your Grandsons—³⁰

The remaining items in the known correspondence between Paine and Franklin may be briefly reviewed. On March 4, 1779, Paine sent his friend an account of his feud with Deane which had

²⁷ In his Memorial to Congress a short time later, January 7, 1779, Paine wrote: "I have obtained fame, honor, and credit in this country. I am proud of these honors" (*Life*, I, 130); to Washington on November 30, 1781, Paine wrote of his years in America as "the most honorary time of my life" (*ibid.*, I, 178).

²⁸ To the British Commissioners Paine had addressed *Crisis* No. VI, dated just four days before this letter, and rebuked them for styling France "the late mutual and natural enemy" of both England and America (*Writings*, I, 267-268). "The Creator of man did not constitute them the natural enemy of each other," wrote Paine. "He has not made any one order of beings so."

²⁹ Lafayette had taken part in various military expeditions and had been wounded at Brandywine. Greene wrote to Washington from Haddonfield, November 26, 1777: "The Marquis is determined to be in the way of danger" (Nolan, *op. cit.*, p. 29).

³⁰ Benjamin Franklin Bache and William Temple Franklin; the latter, as his grandfather's secretary, is found on at least one occasion acting as amanuensis in Franklin's correspondence with Paine, and enclosing his own greetings (*Life*, I, 213 n.).

occurred the previous winter and had led to Paine's resignation.³¹ In February, 1781, Paine sailed for France; although little seems to be known of his contacts with Franklin in Paris,³² he is found writing his next recorded letter to Franklin on May 28, 1781, from Brest, to take leave of the elder statesman and to assure him of the writer's desire to serve him.³³ Hearing the rumor that Franklin wishes to resign, Paine writes with a characteristic touch of self-importance: "I beg leave to assure you that every wish of mine, so far as it can be attended with any service, will be employed to make your resignation, should it be accepted, attended with every possible mark of honor which your long services and high character justly merit." Paine's activities during the next four years were not so remarkable as those of his first triumphant months as a polemic writer, and, having furthermore lost his secretaryship, he appears to have had no direct communication with Franklin. Not until September 23, 1785, do we find Paine writing again to Franklin, from New York, to welcome the sage back to his native land. Franklin dispatched a cordial note to Paine from Philadelphia on the next day; his letter, however, answers certain inquiries which do not occur in Paine's missive, and suggests that perhaps an earlier message of welcome has not survived.³⁴ This assumption seems even more likely when we find Franklin inditing another letter to Paine on September 27; it is an unmistakable answer to the letter of September 23. We note a blunder of Paine's latest and most careless editor, William M. Van der Weyde, in dating this letter September 27, 1775, and making it read—by means of omissions which

³¹ A summary will be found in *Calendar of Franklin Papers in A. P. S.*, II, 36-37.

³² Cf. *Life*, I, 171.

³³ *Calendar of Franklin Papers*, II, 375; quoted in part by Conway, *Life*, I, 171-172. Two undated notes from Paine to Franklin, from their content almost certainly despatched from Brest about this time, are found among the unpublished Bache Papers. Matters of business routine with scant personal interest, they seem hardly to justify transcription here. One, written "Sunday morning," transmits a request from Col. John Laurens of an inventory of articles shipped on board the *Marquis de Lafayette*, and the wish of Jonathan Williams to recover a French grammar left at Passy. The second, apparently sent with the first, adds a postscript about commercial matters and on behalf of Col. Laurens acknowledges a letter just received from Franklin. In these letters Paine appears to be merely the secretary of his traveling companion Laurens.

³⁴ Franklin's letter of this date states that "Ben [i. e., Benjamin Franklin Bache] is very sensible of your politeness," although no mention of him is made in Paine's message of the twenty-third. The close of Franklin's letter, apparently in W. T. Franklin's hand, remarks also without visible connection: "Mr. Williams whom you inquire after accompanied us to America, and is now here" (*Life*, I, 213 and n.).

destroy its real import—as though it were written in answer to a welcome home following Franklin's return from England on May 5, 1775. When we read also in Mr. Van der Weyde's edition that "the letter has not been published before" and that the original is "in the archives of the Philosophical Society in Philadelphia," we are no longer reluctant to quarrel with his accuracy.³⁵ The letter was catalogued long ago by Worthington C. Ford, *List of Franklin Papers in the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1905), and a full text under the correct date was made available to students by Albert H. Smyth's *Writings of Franklin* (New York, 1905, IX, 467), from the Congressional manuscript.

Paine wrote to Franklin on December 31, 1785, concerning experiments with the combustion of candles,³⁶ and on June 6, 1786, regarding Paine's absorbing hobby of bridge-building.³⁷ He again wrote to Franklin on March 31, 1787, to announce his imminent departure for Europe, and from Paris on June 22 of the same year to report the many hospitalities which Franklin's friendship had procured for him there.³⁸ This letter closes his known correspondence with Benjamin Franklin. Some seven years later, after the sage's death, Paine paid his final tribute to Franklin, in *The Age of Reason*, by describing him as the paragon of rational existence.

A final letter, written after Franklin's death to the philosopher's grandson, may serve to round out the history of Paine's correspondence and relations with that family. It is among the unpublished manuscripts in the Henry E. Huntington Library (HM 6937). The recipient was Benjamin Franklin Bache, editor of the *Aurora*, that notable Democratic-Republican newspaper filled with abuse of Washington's administration; at the time this letter was dispatched

³⁵ For the close verbal correspondence of Paine's letter of September 23, and Franklin's of September 27, see the passage quoted above, n. 5. Van der Weyde, *Life and Works of Thomas Paine* (New Rochelle, N. Y.: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), I, 25, in dating this letter 1775 omits passages in the original in which Franklin expresses his yearning for "the Ease and Rest" which "I purposed to myself in resigning my late Employment"—words hardly suitable to a Franklin just embarking on the struggle for independence—but adds that his wish has been overruled by "the unanimous Wish of the different parties that divide the State," in calling him to public office (i.e., as Councilor for Philadelphia; cf. Parton, *op. cit.*, II, 542). Van der Weyde also excises Franklin's remarks on his suffering with the stone and the gout, another evidence of his age and state of health when this letter was written. Conway's *Life* makes no mention of this letter by Franklin.

³⁶ Given in full in *Life*, I, 214-215.

³⁷ This letter and an undated note from Paine to Franklin on the same subject will be found in *Life*, I, 218-219.

³⁸ Summary in *Calendar*, III, 346.

to Philadelphia, in the summer of 1795, Bache was in the maelstrom of controversy because he had published the terms of Jay's secret treaty with England. It was in his care that Paine some six weeks later, on September 20, 1795, sent his celebrated letter of reproachful bitterness to President Washington.³⁹ Bache likewise was the publisher in the next year of Paine's *Letter to George Washington* (Philadelphia, 1796; dated Paris, July 30 of that year), in which the disgruntled patriot publicly attacked the President of the United States. At the time that the present letter was written, Paine lived with James Monroe, seeking to recover his health after his term of imprisonment in the Luxembourg. His mention in this letter of U. S. Consul Fulwar Skipwith is of more than casual interest, because Skipwith figures in the Washington correspondence as a man whose connection with certain abusive anonymous letters emanating from Paris was suspected by Monroe's enemies.⁴⁰ The immediate purpose of Paine's communication to Bache was the desired circulation in America of the writer's *Dissertations on First Principles of Government* (Paris: Printed at the English Press, rue de Vaugirard, No. 970). Paine had composed this pamphlet in hopes of influencing the decision of the National Convention of France in respect to the Constitution; the French edition, to which he here alludes, was published as *Dissertation sur les premiers principes de gouvernement* (Paris: Imprimerie de la rue de Vaugirard, an III).⁴¹ The pamphlet included Paine's speech in the Convention on July 7, 1795, and seems to have been published within that month.⁴²

Mr. Bache⁴³

Paris August 5. 1795

Sir

I have lately published a small tract entitled *Dissertations upon first principles of Govern^t*. —As the Press was set in English as well as in

³⁹ *Life*, II, 170-171; for its background see chap. x, "The Silence of Washington."

⁴⁰ In a communication to President Washington on July 2, 1796, Pickering, Wolcott, and McHenry sought to implicate Consul Skipwith and his Chancellor, Major Montflorenc, and indirectly their friend the Minister, James Monroe, in the writing of these hostile letters from France; see *Writings of Washington*, ed. Worthington C. Ford, XIII, 216-217 n. Cf. George Morgan, *Life of Monroe* (Boston, 1921), pp. 190 and 200. Skipwith later went to Louisiana, instead of settling in his native Virginia; there he became President of the State Senate, but in the course of his quest after preferment was charged by Andrew Jackson with treachery at the time of the British attack on New Orleans (*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, ed. C. F. Adams, Philadelphia, 1875, VII, 201).

⁴¹ This edition, apparently very rare in American libraries, is listed in the *Catalogue générale de la Bibliothèque Nationale*.

⁴² Cf. *Writings*, ed. Conway, III, 256 n.

⁴³ The letter is directed "Benjⁿ. Franklin Bache / Philadelphia / N. America."

French I have struck off an additional quantity. You will receive a Package containing 5000 about three hundred of which are French — Please to advertise them at not more than twenty cents and wholesale according to what the Custom is with you— If there are more than you have occasion for send some to M^r. Fellows of New York—⁴⁴

The Package was sent from the Printers to the care of M^r. Skipwith American Consul at Paris. Two other Packages which belong to the Printer, Mr. Stone, were sent at the same time, intended for M^r. John Vaughn, Philadelphia⁴⁵— I believe that the clerk at M^r. Skipwith's has put your address on all three— should this be the Case, please to rectify the mistake— and send the packages that do not contain the publications that are mine, to M^r. Vaughn— I have enclosed you a letter in the Package— I do not yet learn what vessel they are shipped on, but the Packages were sent to Havre. I hope to be in America before next spring—

Your Friend &c

Thomas Paine

Paine probably desired the circulation of this pamphlet in America because it explained anew his revolutionary creed, and reviewed his old arguments against hereditary right—a right which he suspected Washington and Adams of wishing to perpetuate in the Federalist regime.⁴⁶ His intention of visiting America in the spring of 1796 was doomed to disappointment; in his caustic letter to Washington on September 20, 1795, he alluded to his former “intention to have returned to America the latter end of the present year; but the illness I now suffer prevents me.”⁴⁷ It was not in fact until October, 1802, under the inviting liberalism of President Jefferson, that Paine at long last returned to America—four years after the death of Benjamin Franklin Bache in the yellow fever epidemic of 1798.

⁴⁴ John Fellows of New York, former military officer, sometime newspaper editor, Freemason and deist, was “intimate with Paine during the whole time he lived after returning to this country, and boarded for a year in the same house with him” (Judge Tabor's recollections, in *Life*, II, 398). Paine wrote him letters under the salutation of “Citizen”; cf. *ibid.*, II, 340, 352, 354.

⁴⁵ The name of John Vaughan occurs among Philadelphia merchants at the close of the eighteenth century; see E. P. Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia: A History of the City and Its People* (Philadelphia, n. d.), I, 438; in the same work he appears also as a stockholder in 1790 in the company which sponsored the “New Theatre” in Philadelphia. Whether he is to be identified with a patriot named John Vaughn (a spelling conformable to Paine's here) who enlisted on December 29, 1776, in the Second Pennsylvania Regiment (*Pennsylvania Archives*, 5th ser., II, 902), I do not know.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Dissertations on First Principles of Government* (Paris, 1795), pp. 7 ff., and *Letter to Washington* (Philadelphia, 1796), pp. 11-12.

⁴⁷ *Life*, II, 170.

